

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
SECDEF
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EUCOM
USDOCOSOUTH

S E C R E T STATE 073662

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, PBOR, LY, IT, TS
SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN SHELF DISPUTE: ATHERTON-HEDDA
MEETING ON APRIL 1

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CICCUSNAVEUR, EUCOM PASS POLADS

USDOCOSOUTH PASS CINCSOUTH FOR POLAD

REF: STATE 71629

1. SUMMARY:AFTER REVIEWING BACKGROUND ON LIBYAN-TUNISIAN

SHELF DISPUTE, TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR HEDDA AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON DISCUSSED WAYS IN WHICH U.S. MIGHT HELP TUNISIANS IN THEIR EFFORT TO RESOLVE DISPUTE BY PEACEFUL MEANS. ATHERTON DREW ON POINTS IN GUIDANCE SENT SEPTEL AND ADDED THAT WE WOULD DISCUSS ISSUE WITH FRANCE AND ITALY. END SUMMARY

2. HEDDA'S REPORT ON SITUATION PARALLELED FULL REPORTS FROM EMBASSY TUNIS, INCLUDING QADHAFI'S THREAT TO TUNISIAN FONMIN CHATTY IN TRIPOLI LAST WEEK. HEDDA ADDED THAT CHATTY HAD SPENT THIS WEEK TRAVELLING TO CAPITALS TO SEE FAHMI AND FAHD AND IRAQI REPRESENTATIVE, PROBABLY HAMMADI, RETURNING TO TUNIS ON MARCH 31. TUNISIANS HAD REPEATEDLY ASKED ITALIANS TO COMPLY WITH THEIR EARLIER PROMISES ABOUT WITHDRAWAL OF DRILLING RIG, AND HAD SOUGHT

FRENCH SUPPORT AS WELL. HEDDA SUGGESTED THAT U.S. MIGHT ALSO INTERCEDE WITH FRANCE AND ITALY.

3. ATHERTON REASSURED HEDDA THAT WE WOULD HELP IN SECURITY COUNCIL, IF NECESSARY, AND SUGGESTED THAT TUNISIAN UN MISSION TALK TO SYG WALDHEIM. HEDDA TOOK OCCASION TO ASK FOR INCREASED U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING REDEYE. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT NO ASSURANCES ON INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE WERE POSSIBLE AT THE MOMENT. IN ANY EVENT, TUNISIA APPEARED MORE IN NEED OF DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS. IN THIS REGARD, HE SAID WE WOULD EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH FRANCE AND ITALY.

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4. HEDDA SAID THIS WOULD BE HELPFUL PARTICULARLY IN ROME,

WHERE TUNIS BY ITSELF COULD SCARCELY COMPETE WITH LIBYA, GIVEN IMPORTANT LIBYAN-ITALIAN ECONOMIC LINKS. SPEAKING WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS, HE ASKED THE U.S. TO GIVE CONSIDERATION TO WHAT FURTHER STEPS COULD BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT THAT QADHAFI SHOULD CONTINUE TO PUSH TUNISIANS TOWARD THE WALL. HE SPECIFICALLY RECALLED U.S. POLITICAL/MILITARY SUPPORT IN AUGUST 1976 (EXTENDED SIXTH FLEET SHIP VISIT, BIRTHDAY MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT FORD, EXCHANGE OF INTELLIGENCE, ETC.), AND LINKED SUPPORT FROM U.S. AND OTHERS TO QADHAFI'S AGREEMENT ONLY A FEW WEEKS LATER TO SUBMIT ISSUE TO ICJ.

5. COMMENT: NEITHER HEDDA NOR ATHERTON WAS AWARE AT TIME OF MEETING OF INFORMATION IN REPORT BEING REPEATED SEPTEL THAT ITALIAN RIG SCARABEO HAS APPARENTLY MOVED TO EAST OUT OF DISPUTED AREA. ALTHOUGH THIS WILL

HELP TO DEFUSE SITUATION, WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHETHER
TUNISIANS WILL WISH TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR SC CONSIDERA-
TION OF ISSUE. MERE REMOVAL OF RIG DOES NOT RESOLVE
QADHAFI'S BACKTRACKING ON AUGUST 1976 AGREEMENT TO SUBMIT
MATTER TO HAGUE, NOR HIS THREATENING DEMAND THAT OPERA-
TIONS IN ISIS FIELD TO THE NORTH BE SUSPENDED.

6. FOR ROME AND PARIS: WE WILL FORWARD INSTRUCTIONS AND
TALKING POINTS SEPTEL FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH FONMINS ON
SHELF ISSUE.
VANCE

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIS CAPTION ADDED PER MR. STEINER, S/S-O.

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